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ABSTRACT

A program in which children were released from school one hour and thirty minutes earlier than the regular time each Tuesday, to provide time for elementary school personnel to participate in inservice training activities, is described. Three Tuesdays each month were designated for individual school activities to be planned and implemented by the principals and their staffs. The remaining Tuesdays were set aside for meetings organized by consultants and directors. Questionnaire returns by 80 percent of the elementary classroom teachers indicated that much released time was spent on: conferring with parents, planning and discussing new instructional methods and techniques, attending faculty meetings to discuss school policies and procedures, attending grade level meetings, and developing new materials with other staff members in the school. About 9 out of 10 elementary staff members felt students would receive a better education as a result of released time activities. Recommendations were to continue the program, continue the once-a-week schedule, provide for more staff input into planning released time activities, and provide more time for sharing ideas and working together within individual buildings. (Author/CK)

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Minneapolis Public Schools

Teacher Released Time in Minneapolis Elementary Schools: An Evaluation 1971-72

Lary Johnson

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July 1972
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Minneapolis Public Schools

Teacher Released Time in Minneapolis Elementary Schools: An Evaluation 1971-72

Summary

Every Tuesday during the 1971-72 school year, elementary students were released from school one hour and thirty minutes earlier than the regular time to provide time for staff members to participate in staff development activities. Three Tuesdays in each month were designated for individual school activities to be planned and implemented by the principals and their staffs. The remaining Tuesdays in each month were set aside for meetings organized by consultants and directors. See page 1

Questionnaire returns by 80% of the elementary classroom teachers indicated that much released time was spent on: conferring with parents, planning and discussing new instructional methods and techniques, attending faculty meetings to discuss school policies and procedures, attending grade level meetings, and developing new materials with other staff members in the school. These activities also were rated as being valuable uses of released time by the participants. See pages 5-9

About nine out of 10 elementary staff members felt students would receive a better education as a result of released time activities. Only 2% of the staff members said the released time program should be discontinued. About three-fourths of the teachers said the program should be continued without change, while one-fourth said some change was needed. In the first year of the released time program in 1970-71, only 42% of the teachers wanted the program continued without change. See pages 2,3

Based on the questionnaire results and staff comments, recommendations were made to continue the program, to continue the once-a-week schedule, to provide for more staff input into planning released time activities, and to provide more time for sharing ideas and working together within individual buildings. A more complete plan for the development of the released time program was recommended as a potentially useful activity. See page 13

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Minneapolis Public Schools

Teacher Released Time in Minneapolis Elementary Schools: An Evaluation 1971-72

To provide time for elementary school personnel to participate in in-service training activities, children were released from school one hour and thirty minutes earlier than the regular time each Tuesday during the 1971-72 school year. This was the second year that the Minnesota State Department of Education gave permission to have the Elementary Released Time Program.

The first, second, and fourth Tuesdays of each month were set aside for individual school activities such as grade level meetings, staff meetings, and special staff development programs. Each principal and his staff were responsible for planning and implementing their own program. The third and fifth Tuesdays were used by consultants and directors for meetings with city-wide, pyramid, or other selected groups of personnel.

During the year, the Staff Development Committee of the Elementary School Assembly (ESA)[1] was actively working on methods to improve and evaluate the released time program. In November 1971, the Staff Development Committee requested each elementary school to send the committee information regarding the individual school's needs, the released time activities that were scheduled to meet these needs, and the methods that were being used to inform the community of their activities.

After the first semester of the 1971-72 school year, the Department of Elementary Education asked the Research and Evaluation Department to develop a questionnaire to survey the elementary staff regarding the value of the Elementary Released Time Program. This questionnaire was to be independent from the Evaluation activities of the ESA Staff Development Committee.

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[1] The Elementary School Assembly has an elected representative from each elementary school and ex-officio members from administrative positions. The main function of the ESA is to improve communication between administrators and the teaching staff in curriculum and staff development areas. The Staff Development Committee is comprised of eight teachers, two principals, and one administrator.

In May 1972 a brief questionnaire was distributed to each building with copies for all certificated personnel. The building principal was responsible for the distribution and return of the questionnaires to the Research and Evaluation Department. After most schools had returned their questionnaires, it was discovered that two schools had not received questionnaires. Since feedback to individual schools was not planned, and since a representative city-wide sample was probably obtained from the other schools, another attempt to send questionnaires to these two schools was not made. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix A.

Questionnaires were returned by 950 teachers, 223 support personnel (social workers, librarians, resource teachers, counselors, etc.), and 32 administrators (although directions to the buildings did not ask for responses by administrators). Based on the October 1971 "Personnel Sight Count" compiled by the Information Services Center, this return represented 80% of the teachers, 57% of the support personnel, and 44% of the administrators. It is not known whether the sample of support personnel and administrators is representative of the entire group of elementary support personnel and administrators.

Table 1 on page 3 gives the responses of classroom teachers, support personnel, and administrators to three questions about the value of the Elementary Released Time Program. Elementary personnel overwhelmingly endorsed the value of the released time program. Ninety percent of the classroom teachers felt that students, in the long run, would receive a better education as a result of the Elementary Released Time Program, 3% of the teachers did not feel students would receive a better education, and 7% were not sure.

Table 1

Responses of Elementary Classroom Teachers, Support Personnel, and Administrators to Questions on the Value of the Elementary Released Time Program

Question	Response	Classroom Teachers N=950	Support Personnel N=223	Administrators N=32
Do you feel that your students, in the long run, will receive a better education as a result of the Elementary Released Time Program	Yes	90%	84%	93%
	No	3	4	3
	Not Sure	7	12	3
Estimate the percentage of your released time that was spent on activities that you think will benefit the education of students	80-100%	68%	60%	78%
	50-79%	23	28	19
	20-49%	7	10	3
	0-19%	2	2	0
The Elementary Released Time Program should be:	Continued without change	74%	71%	67%
	Discontinued	2	2	3
	Continued with changes	24	27	30

Results were similar to the previous year. In response to a similar question asked in May 1971, 86% of the classroom teachers said students would receive a better education as a result of released time activities, 4% said they would not, and 10% did not know.[2]

When asked to estimate the amount of their released time that was spent on activities that would benefit the education of students, 68% of the teachers estimated they spent 80-100% of their released time on activities beneficial to students, 23% estimated they spent 50-79% of their time on beneficial activities, and 9% said they spent less than half of their time on beneficial activities.

[2] R. W. Faunce, Elementary School Released Time Evaluation: 1970-71 Minneapolis Public Schools, May 1971.

Ninety-eight percent of the responding teachers wanted the released time program continued. Three out of four teachers in this group wanted it continued without change and one of four teachers felt some changes should be made. A summary of suggested changes is given on page 12. (In the previous year, substantially fewer (42%) teachers wanted the program continued without change). Only 2% of the respondents felt the program should be discontinued. This percentage was the same as in the previous year.

The responses of support personnel and administrators were fairly similar to those of the classroom teachers, although support personnel responded somewhat less favorably than classroom teachers.

Involvement in Planning

Classroom teachers appeared to have a moderate amount of involvement in planning released time activities (Table 2). Seventy-one percent of the teachers had input into planning many or some meetings, while 50% of the support personnel and 100% of the responding administrators had input into planning many or some meetings.

Table 2

Involvement in Planning Released Time Meetings

(Percent)

Question	Response	Classroom Teachers N=950	Support Personnel N=223	Administrators N=32
To what extent were you involved in planning Elementary Released Time meetings?	Input into many meetings	33%	16%	91%
	Input into some meetings	38	34	9
	Input into one or two meetings	16	27	0
	No input into meetings	13	23	0
Would you like to have more input into planning the released time meetings?	Yes	53%	54%	24%
	No	47	46	76

About one-half of the teachers and support personnel said they would like to have more input into planning released time meetings. Administrators apparently felt they had enough input. Only 24% of the responding administrators said they would like more input.

Released Time Schedule

When asked to choose between this year's once-a-week schedule and a half-day, once-a-month schedule, most respondents preferred the once-a-week schedule for released time used this year (91% of the teachers, 85% of the support personnel, and 79% of the administrators).

Released Time Activities

Each building was responsible for planning and implementing its own released time activities. To determine the activities that actually occurred, and to assess the corresponding value of each activity, elementary personnel responded to a list of 18 activities by indicating (1) whether they spent A Lot, Some, A Little, or No time on the activity, and (2) whether each activity on which they spent time was Very Valuable, Of Some Value, or Of No Value. Table 3 on pages 6-9 gives the responses of classroom teachers and support personnel to these activities.

The activities in Table 3 are arranged in order from those activities on which teachers spent much of their released time to activities on which teachers spent little released time. Eighty-nine percent of the classroom teachers said they spent A Lot or Some time in conferences with parents about their children. Ninty-three percent of the teachers thought parent conferences were a Very Valuable use of released time. Other activities on which teachers said they spent a substantial amount of time and which they considered to be a valuable use of released time were planning and discussing new instructional methods and techniques, faculty meetings to discuss school

Table 3

Released Time Activities of Elementary Classroom Teachers and Support Personnel

Activity	Time Spent and Value		Classroom Teachers N=950	Support Personnel N=223
Conferences with parents about their children	Time Spent:	A Lot	47%	14%
		Some	42	35
		A Little	7	22
		None	3	29
	Value:	Very Valuable	93%	74%
		Of Some Value	6	22
		Of No Value	0	4
Planning and discussing new instructional methods and techniques	Time Spent:	A Lot	37%	26%
		Some	42	49
		A Little	17	18
		None	3	8
	Value:	Very Valuable	69%	67%
		Of Some Value	30	32
		Of No Value	2	1
Faculty meetings to discuss school policies and procedures	Time Spent:	A Lot	28%	27%
		Some	50	51
		A Little	18	20
		None	4	3
	Value:	Very Valuable	60%	48%
		Of Some Value	38	49
		Of No Value	2	3
Grade level meetings within my school	Time Spent:	A Lot	23%	11%
		Some	47	36
		A Little	22	17
		None	8	36
	Value:	Very Valuable	80%	43%
		Of Some Value	19	45
		Of No Value	1	11
Developing new materials with other staff members in the school	Time Spent:	A Lot	24%	16%
		Some	39	32
		A Little	21	28
		None	16	24
	Value:	Very Valuable	73%	56%
		Of Some Value	22	40
		Of No Value	4	4

Table 3 (Continued)

Released Time Activities of Elementary
Classroom Teachers and Support Personnel

Activity	Time Spent and Value		Classroom Teachers N=950	Support Personnel N=223
Identifying objectives for my school	Time Spent:	A Lot	22%	25%
		Some	39	34
		A Little	30	27
		None	9	14
	Value:	Very Valuable	49%	51%
		Of Some Value	47	45
		Of No Value	4	4
Human relations training activities	Time Spent:	A Lot	18%	16%
		Some	39	40
		A Little	26	27
		None	17	17
	Value:	Very Valuable	50%	51%
		Of Some Value	45	43
		Of No Value	5	6
Communication skills in-service	Time Spent:	A Lot	16%	17%
		Some	38	38
		A Little	27	20
		None	20	25
	Value:	Very Valuable	55%	49%
		Of Some Value	40	47
		Of No Value	5	5
Social Studies in-service	Time Spent:	A Lot	14%	5%
		Some	43	21
		A Little	28	19
		None	16	55
	Value:	Very Valuable	45%	31%
		Of Some Value	49	42
		Of No Value	6	28
Math in-service	Time Spent:	A Lot	11%	2%
		Some	58	26
		A Little	23	23
		None	8	49
	Value:	Very Valuable	57%	42%
		Of Some Value	41	32
		Of No Value	3	26

Table 3 (Continued)

Released Time Activities of Elementary
Classroom Teachers and Support Personnel

Activity	Time Spent and Value	Classroom Teachers N=950	Support Personnel N=223
Music in-service	Time Spent: A Lot	2%	12%
	Some	19	13
	A Little	24	12
	None	55	64
	Value: Very Valuable	38%	38%
	Of Some Value	46	31
	Of No Value	16	31
Science in-service	Time Spent: A Lot	8%	5%
	Some	40	6
	A Little	26	16
	None	25	63
	Value: Very Valuable	52	33%
	Of Some Value	42	32
	Of No Value	6	35
Art in-service	Time Spent: A Lot	3%	7%
	Some	24	15
	A Little	27	17
	None	47	62
	Value: Very Valuable	35%	43%
	Of Some Value	43	31
	Of No Value	21	25
Physical Education/ Health in-service	Time Spent: A Lot	1%	13%
	Some	10	11
	A Little	22	14
	None	67	62
	Value: Very Valuable	26%	39%
	Of Some Value	48	36
	Of No Value	26	25
Exchanging ideas with staff from other schools	Time Spent: A Lot	9%	20%
	Some	32	42
	A Little	34	28
	None	26	9
	Value: Very Valuable	55%	65%
	Of Some Value	39	35
	Of No Value	6	1

Table 3 (Continued)

Released Time Activities of Elementary
Classroom Teachers and Support Personnel

Activity	Time Spent and Value		Classroom Teachers N=950	Support Personnel N=223
Developing new materials on my own	Time Spent:	A Lot	10%	19%
		Some	27	33
		A Little	30	24
		None	32	24
	Value:	Very Valuable	72%	74%
		Of Some Value	20	24
		Of No Value	8	2
Visiting community agencies	Time Spent:	A Lot	2%	4%
		Some	23	25
		A Little	25	23
		None	50	48
	Value:	Very Valuable	42%	53%
		Of Some Value	41	37
		Of No Value	17	10
Preparing for my daily classes	Time Spent:	A Lot	6%	6%
		Some	12	20
		A Little	29	25
		None	53	50
	Value:	Very Valuable	68%	65%
		Of Some Value	15	25
		Of No Value	17	10

policies and procedures, grade level meetings, and developing new materials with other staff members in the school.

Activities on which teachers did not spend much time, but were considered a valuable use of time by teachers who did participate in the activities, were developing new materials on their own and preparing for their daily classes. Overall, teachers gave favorable ratings to all 18 activities listed in the questionnaire.

Compared with the classroom teachers, the support personnel who responded to the questionnaire neither indicated as much participation in the listed activities nor indicated that the activities were as valuable.

In addition to the 18 listed activities, space was provided on the questionnaire for the respondents to list other released time activities. Twenty or more staff members indicated that they spent time on the following activities: attending reading in-service meetings, discussing desegregation plans, discussing behavior modification techniques, visiting other schools, attending audio-vusual in-service meetings, and listening to presentations on special education, retirement, and poetry and literature. Other activities on which at least ten staff members indicated they spent released time were: working on experimental report cards, visiting homes, attending outdoor education sessions, evaluating the school's educational program, discussing test results, and attending presentations about community resource volunteers, perceptual motor skills, the magic circle technique, Indian affairs, drug education, and neurologically impaired children. These additional activities also received favorable ratings on the value scale.

Suggestions for Change

Several hundred responses were made by elementary personnel to the open-ended question that asked for suggested changes in the released time program. Many comments were endorsements of the program. With the exception of these endorsements and other comments that gave information identical to that obtained from the objective questions, all suggestions were analyzed and grouped according to similar content. Nine categories emerged. The number after each response, within a category, represents the number of staff members who made similar suggestions.

1. Between Teacher Planning: some teachers asked for more time to share ideas and plan with other teachers in their building.

Grade level (or primary, intermediate level) meetings	40
Informal sharing of ideas	14
Team planning	4

2. Planning for Implementation: more time to prepare and implement ideas picked up during released time was requested by several teachers.

More time to prepare for implementation of ideas	13
Planning innovative programs	12

3. Individual and Building Needs: many teachers requested that more attention be given to needs of individuals and buildings.

Individual classroom and unit development	15
Plan for own building needs	12
More individual choice of meetings	7
Individual research planning	7
Less theory, more practical	6
More workshops of individual's choice	4
Less large lectures	4
Staff meetings do not meet individual needs	3
Plans and problems of individual schools	2

4. Interschool Sharing of Ideas:

Exchange ideas with other schools	19
See other schools in action	3
Visits to other schools	2

5. Materials and Instruction: development of materials and discussion of instructional methods were stressed by some teachers.

Development of new materials	19
Subject matter in-service	13
More experts in the field	8
New instructional techniques	7
Materials workshop	4
More resource teachers and specialists	3

6. Community Involvement:

More parent-teacher conferences	14
Greater community participation	5

7. Human Relations:

Human relations training	15
Desegregation planning	4
Bring staff closer together	2

8. Released Time Planning: a few teachers suggested better planning of the released time programs.

Better planning	7
More creative planning	5
Clearer objectives	5
Better coordination of city-wide meetings	3

9. Miscellaneous:

Fewer faculty meetings	9
Schools released at 1:15 should not lose prep time	6
Time for record-keeping (cum cards, etc.)	7
Report cards and student evaluation	3
College credit courses	2
More time	2
Team conferences regarding students	2
Program evaluation	2
Accountability for participants	2

In summary: the suggestions for changes indicate that elementary personnel would like to have more released time to work together, or as individuals, to develop (or become familiar with) ideas and to make plans for implementation of ideas to meet individual needs within their building.

Recommendations

Since this evaluation was designed to give a general measure of the value of the Elementary Released Time Program rather than a measure of attainment of more specific objectives, it is difficult to make specific recommendations based on the questionnaire data. However, a few general observations do stand out.

Recommendation One: Continue the Elementary Released Time Program. Ninety percent of the elementary teachers who responded to the questionnaire said that students, in the long run, would receive a better education as a result of the released time program.

Recommendation Two: Continue the present once-a-week released time schedule. Nine out of ten teachers preferred the once-a-week schedule to a once-a-month half-day schedule.

Recommendation Three: Give the teaching and support staff more input into planning the released time meetings. More than half of the classroom teachers and support personnel said they would like more involvement in planning the released time activities. Almost one-third of the teachers and one-half of the support personnel had little involvement in planning meetings this year.

Recommendation Four: Provide more time for staff members to share ideas and to work together within their building. A number of teachers asked that more time be devoted to grade level or primary intermediate meetings. They also requested time to more thoroughly develop ideas on which they were working.

Recommendation Five: Although alluded to by only a few staff members on the questionnaire, it may be useful to develop a more thorough plan for released time program development. The basics of this approach have been discussed by the Staff Development Committee of the Elementary School Assembly. Essentially the plan would include the following events.

1. Identify the needs at each individual school. These needs could be specific to individuals, to groups of individuals, to an individual school, or they could be common needs identified by area school administrators.
2. Based on identified needs, the staff at each school would specify objectives that they would attempt to reach during the year. These objectives would include goals identified by area adminstrators.
3. Identify activities necessary to reach the objectives, i.e., what activities will most likely lead to the achievement of the stated objectives?
4. The evaluation of the released time program would then be based on whether or not the stated objectives were attained.

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Appendix A

The Elementary Released Time Questionnaire

Minneapolis Public Schools
Elementary Released Time Evaluation 1971-72

The responses to this questionnaire will be used to provide feedback to members of the elementary staff within the schools and at the central office. Your reactions will be used to suggest improvements in the Elementary Released Time Program. With this in mind, give the questions some thoughtful attention. You should finish within 15 minutes. The questionnaire was designed for teachers so some of the questions may not apply to supportive personnel. If a question does not apply, leave it blank. Do not sign your name.

(1) To what extent were you involved in planning Elementary Released Time meetings.

____1. I had input into planning many meetings

____2. I had input into planning some meetings

____3. I had input into planning one or two meetings

____4. I did not have any input into planning the meetings

(2) Would you like to have more input into planning the released time meetings?

____1. Yes

____2. No

(3) Do you feel that your students, in the long run, will receive a better education as a result of the Elementary Released Time Program?

____1. Yes

____2. No

____3. Not sure

(4) The Elementary Released Time Program should be:

____1. Continued without change

____2. Discontinued

____3. Continued with these changes:

(5) Indicate your position in the school.

____1. Classroom teacher

____2. Administrator

____3. Support personnel; resource teacher, SSW, counselor, librarian, etc.

(6) Estimate the percentage of your released time that was spent on activities that you think will benefit the education of students.

____1. 80 - 100% of released time

____2. 50 - 79% of released time

____3. 20 - 49% of released time

____4. 0 - 19% of released time

(7) Which released time schedule would you prefer next year?

____1. Once a week, 2:00 - 3:45

____2. Once a month, half-days

BE SURE TO COMPLETE PAGE TWO ON REVERSE SIDE

Research and Evaluation Department
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On the left, check the extent to which you had released time activities in the following areas. Then, on the right, for each activity where you checked Yes, check the value of the activity. At the end of the list of activities, add any other activities that are not listed.

How Much Released Time Did You Spend on This Activity?					How Valuable Were These Activities?			
	(1) A Lot	(2) Some	(3) A Little	(4) None	Activity - Area	(1) Very Valuable	(2) Of Some Value	(3) Of No Value
(8)	____	____	____	____	Math inservice	____	____	____ (26)
(9)	____	____	____	____	Music inservice	____	____	____ (27)
(10)	____	____	____	____	Science inservice	____	____	____ (28)
(11)	____	____	____	____	Social Studies inservice	____	____	____ (29)
(12)	____	____	____	____	Communication skills inservice	____	____	____ (30)
(13)	____	____	____	____	Art inservice	____	____	____ (31)
(14)	____	____	____	____	Physical Education/Health inservice	____	____	____ (32)
(15)	____	____	____	____	Planning and discussing new instructional methods and techniques	____	____	____ (33)
(16)	____	____	____	____	Developing new materials with other staff members in the school	____	____	____ (34)
(17)	____	____	____	____	Developing new materials on my own	____	____	____ (35)
(18)	____	____	____	____	Human relations training activities	____	____	____ (36)
(19)	____	____	____	____	Identifying objectives for my school	____	____	____ (37)
(20)	____	____	____	____	Preparing for my daily classes	____	____	____ (38)
(21)	____	____	____	____	Conferences with parents about their children	____	____	____ (39)
(22)	____	____	____	____	Exchanging ideas with staff from other schools	____	____	____ (40)
(23)	____	____	____	____	Visiting community agencies	____	____	____ (41)
(24)	____	____	____	____	Faculty meetings to discuss school policies and procedures	____	____	____ (42)
(25)	____	____	____	____	Grade level meetings within my school	____	____	____ (43)

How Much Released Time Did You Spend on This Activity?				Other activities: List any activities, special topics and/or speakers not included above.	How Valuable Were These Activities?		
A Lot	Some	A Little	None		Very Valuable	Of Some Value	Of No Value
____	____	____	____	_____	____	____	____
____	____	____	____	_____	____	____	____
____	____	____	____	_____	____	____	____
____	____	____	____	_____	____	____	____